

Russia at the Crossroads

Political

- Autocratic monarchy with support of Orthodox Church
 - Remember: Moscow = “3rd Rome”
 - Romanov Family rules!
- Foundation of rule: control of land by nobles
 - Control of serfs seen as foundation to social order

Attempted Political Reforms

- 1861 Czar Alexander II abolishes serfdom (reaction to Crimean War)
 - Nobles compensated for loss of serfs and land
 - Former serfs had to pay tax for land they got (couldn't afford)
 - Did little to increase ag. Production
 - Made serfs angry, some went to more radical beliefs
 - 1864- *Zemstvos* (elected district assemblies) formed- “lip service”

Attempted Political Reforms

- 1864: Reform of courts
 - More “Western” feel:
 - Independent judges
 - Appellate courts
 - Trial by Jury for minor offenses
 - Led to emergence of attorney class, lowered corruption

Heavy-Handed Political Enforcement

- Censorship of media
- Use of gov't spies to infiltrate dissenting groups
- Russification in Baltic region and Siberia
- Pogroms targeted Jews

Economic

- SERFS!
 - Technically not slaves
 - But, could not leave w/o permission, and could be bought and sold by nobles
 - Were taxed by nobles, gov't, and church
- NOBLES
 - Exempt from taxes and military service

Any similarities here?

Economic Reforms

Attempts at Reform:

- By 1850s, Russia woefully behind rest of Europe
- 1864 Emancipation of Serfs set to:
 - Increase Ag. Prod.
 - Create mobile labor force for Industry

Think about Industrialization in England

Economic Reforms

- Count Sergei Witte, 1892-1903 (Czar's Finance Minister):
 - Railway construction
 - Colonization/Exploitation of Siberia
 - Trans-Siberian Railway
 - Savings Banks
 - Protective Tariffs
 - Reliance on foreign loans to develop Ind.
 - French/Belgium: Steel
 - Britain: Petroleum

Problems with Economic Reforms

- Workers Exploited
 - Serfs had difficulties adjusting to factory work
 - Brutal living and working conditions
 - 1897 - max. work day = 11.5 hours
 - Trade unions/Strikes outlawed
 - Businessmen did very well for selves, did not seek political ambitions
 - Disillusioned workers leaned toward radicalism

Religious

Russian Orthodox Church

- 1/2 of Russians belonged to it

Outside of Western Russia, many other religions practiced

- Islam in what would become the “stans”
- Animism in Siberia

Social

- Land-based inequality of feudalism replaced with wealth-based inequality of industry
- Tech. developments DO NOT equal political/social improvement
- Use of repression to put down dissent
 - Secret Police
- Anti-Semitism: Frequent Pogroms

Intellectual

- Czarist reforms not intended to give more rights:
 - Develop industrialization to catch up with West
 - Develop presence and military capabilities to move south into weak Ottoman Empire, kind of unsettled Afghanistan/India;
 - east into weakened China; east to deal with up-and-coming Japan and increased Euro presence in China

Intellectual Reactions

- Serfs consistently denied rights, privileges
 - RADICALISM!
 - Revolutionary propaganda to disgruntled industrial workers
 - Land And Freedom Party:
 - USE OF TERROR
 - 1879 - attempted assassination of Alexander II
 - 1881- People's Will faction accomplished it
 - 1905- Bloody Sunday: workers marched on Czar Nicholas II Winter Palace
 - Gov't troops opened fire on them, killed 130
 - Radicals called for unions, strikes, creation of soviets
 - Czar gave in a little and created Duma, (Russia's first Parliamentary body)

Near Geographic - Humiliating Defeats

- Crimean War (1853-1856):
 - Coalition of British, Ottoman, French, Sardinians defeated Russians
 - Showed Russians could not fight with the strong countries
 - Led to reform of emancipating serfs and industrializing to catch up
- Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905):
 - Friction btwn Russians and Japanese over Korea and Manchuria
 - Japanese sneak-attack on Port Arthur
 - Russian Baltic Fleet defeated by Japanese
 - Humiliating loss for Russians, spelled beginning of end for Nicholas II

Near Geographic

- World's largest country – 17,075,000 sq. km (6,592,819 sq. mi.).
 - Almost twice as large as Canada, the second largest country.
- Westernmost point near Kaliningrad (formerly Königsberg, 20°31'E) in the Baltic Sea; Easternmost point at Cape Dezhnev (170° W) on the Bering Straits.
- These points are separated by approximately 170° of longitude, nearly halfway around the world, and crossing 11 time zones.

Near Geographic

- Moscow to Vladivostok is 9,332 km (5000 mi.) and it would take seven days and nights on the Trans-Siberian Railway to make the trip.

Questions to Consider:

- Russia's Parallels to French Revolution?
- Russia's Attempts to learn lesson from British Industrialization?
- Pros and Cons of such a large amount of territory?
- How is Russia similar/different to weakening Ottoman, Qing?